


Country of the Week: Swaziland

Swaziland is home to 507 bird species and 107 endemic mammal species, as well as large nature reserves that protect endangered and vulnerable species.

In addition to its natural beauty, the culture of Swaziland merges an array of unique and traditional practices with a diversified, contemporary economy. The principal Swazi social unit is the homestead, and communities still host ancient events, such as the Incwala ceremony. While subsistence agriculture employs approximately 70 percent of the population, manufacturing accounts for much of the nation's exports sector.

These dual cultural influences of traditional practice and a modern economy make Swaziland a special place. Because of you, as well as other dedicated [Young African Leaders Initiative \(YALI\) Network members](#), Swaziland is the YALI Network #CountryoftheWeek!

Getting girls involved

Nozipho leads a gardening project to  encourage healthy food choices and good nutrition.

Nozipho Ndzabandzaba made plans to start a girls club while attending the Regional Leadership Centre Southern Africa, and soon after returning to her community, she began working with [Girls Leading Our World \(GLOW\)](#).


Nozipho shares practical knowledge and skills with young girls, and as a counselor, she raises awareness about financial literacy, reproductive health, gender equality, and nutrition. "I share some of the knowledge I get ... from the [YALI Network Online Courses](#) with the girls, and also have in-depth discussions on good leadership," she says.

GLOW offers different programs, and Nozipho explains that "the club is all about empowering girls ... so that they become great world leaders in the future." At a recent event, Nozipho led the club in a gardening project to emphasize healthy food choices and good nutrition. "The programme has helped contribute to ... gender equality and empowering all women and girls."

Nozipho passionately discusses her work, hoping it will inspire others "to realize that, one can bring change and make some difference in their space, it does not have to be huge, but that little difference one makes even in one person's life can still go a long way."

Being a "better agent of change"

Oscar Gomez Ca has hosted 60 [#YALILearns events](#) in his community and as an active member of the YALI Network, he is motivated and inspired to become a "better agent of change."

Oscar hosts an event on computer  literacy, plumbing, electrical

engineering, welding, and music.


Throughout his experiences, he realized his own personal worth and value as a leader, and he hopes to encourage other Swazi men and women to give back as well. One of his most recent events included “a three month course on computer literacy, plumbing, electrical [engineering], welding, and music.” The program reached men and women living in rural areas to provide basic knowledge of these skills and technologies, and for many of these attendees, this was the first time they were exposed to such learning.

After the course concluded, an additional program about “Walking with the Wounded Children, understanding the rights of women and girls, and climate change” was offered. The broad trainings provided attendees with resources to improve their psychological, academic, and professional well-being.

His passion and dedication continue to shape a hopeful future for Swaziland!

Instilling an entrepreneurial spirit

Simise Masilela has a strong entrepreneurial spirit — a trait he learned from his mother and one he tries to instill in young boys and girls living in Swaziland.

Simise visits a local orphanage in his  community where he sings and dances with students.

Simise volunteers with several NGOs that focus on youth affairs. “My job [is] to educate youth about the essence of entrepreneurship,” he says. Because youth are unaware of how to start and organize a business, Simise hopes to share foundational training with as many students as possible. “Now that the youth are aware of the essence of entrepreneurship, more are willing to venture into business and create job opportunities.”

Simise also hosts #YALILearns events, visiting orphanages, donating food, and teaching children about the importance of education. While his visits are full of learning, he also has fun, singing and dancing with children. Hoping to foster a new generation of business leaders, as well as an economically prosperous future, Simise pledges to continue promoting education in Swaziland.

If you’re interested in getting involved in your community, like the [YALI Network Facebook page](#), and access free online trainings, virtual events, and more by visiting the [YALI Network website](#).
